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## BOOK REVIEWS

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HISTORY OF THE UNIVERSITY OF VIRGINIA, 1819-1919. 4 Vols. By Philip Alexander Bruce. New York. The Macmillan Company. 1920.

This is a great book by a great historian. With a thoroughness seldom equaled and never surpassed, Mr. Bruce has collected and used every scrap of material bearing on the story of our State University from its inception to the present time. Indeed, the completeness of the work rather appalls the reader until he gets into it and begins to admire its artistic finish. Mr. Bruce is a master both of the science and art of history-writing.

The first volume is naturally given to the establishment of the University and its physical creation. There is a preliminary sketch of the creator, "The Impress of Jefferson." This is followed by a detailed account of Jefferson's "Struggle for a University." Most Virginians of that day thought that the one State college of William and Mary was sufficient, and it was Jefferson's difficult task to convince a reluctant people and legislature that a higher institution of learning was needed. He succeeded, and then, along with Cabell and Cocke, brought the University of Virginia into being. The chapter on "The Building of the University" is most detailed. Seldom is architectural history given so completely. Nothing remains to be told of the launching of the great school at Charlottesville.

The second volume deals with the "Formative and Experimental Stage." There is an excellent account of the English professors, Long, Blaettermann, Key, Bonnycastle and Dungleison, who came to our shores to impart European culture. To this is added the story of the first American professors. Administrative details are given at length: the organization of the schools, matriculation, etc. There is likewise a full description of the courses, the text-books used, methods of instruction and degrees.

The first two volumes give the beginnings. The third volume tells the story of the expansion of the experimental State University into an important American college, the peer of Yale and Harvard. Its main section is entitled "Expansion and Reformation, 1842-1861." By 1830, the university was on its feet and had begun to draw students from the lower South, as well as from Virginia and that sister State which has always patronized Virginia institutions, North Carolina. By 1840, the Charlottesville institution had become the pet school of the planter class; it was a fashionable finishing-school for young men and anything but the school for the whole people which Jefferson devised. This alteration in its destiny, however, was mainly beneficial to the University; it became the stamping-ground of the finest breed of men ever raised in America, who owned the university from 1840 to 1861 and who continued to come to it until about 1890, when the breed may be said to have become extinct.

The young Southern planter was a superb individualist and, generally speaking, a fine man. He drank oceans of whiskey and played poker all night—yet frequently managed to leave the university with a deep culture. He habitually carried fire-arms and habitually used them on the fixtures of the university—indeed, as late as 1900, students were in the habit of shooting at electric lights with pistols. We mention this as one of the few possible additions to Mr. Bruce's narrative. The pranks were numberless and sometimes ended in riots, especially on those delightful occasions when an *Uncle Tom's Cabin* company played at the town theater. Then the students, *en masse*, proceeded and very properly, to be sure—to mob the performers and break up the show. The police would fatuously interfere, and there would be a grand fight in which several policemen would be considerably damaged. (We regret to say that Mr. Bruce forgot to include these mobbings of shows. They were a feature of the university once. The boys who go there now are too gentle for such shindies.)

These splendid individualists who knew no law but their own will finally precipitated a serious riot in 1845 in which a professor was killed and the prestige of the University seriously injured. So there had to be a Reformation. Every human institution seems to need reforming sooner or later; but one may regret the necessity of it at the University of Virginia. True the students did get out of bounds and something had to be done—but they were such a virile and characterful lot of youths, the descendants of the men who made the United States and themselves later its brightest ornaments until abolition came to ruin them.

Mr. Bruce's account of the Great Insurrection of 1845 is the most interesting thing in his interesting book. It is to be regretted, however, that he has so little sympathy for the students. He seems to think that a little property damage was a very serious matter, while, in reality, it was the result of the exuberance of youth. Indeed, if there is any defect in a book so comprehensive and admirable it is in the lack of a study of the student personnel—a study which would narrate the careers of outstanding students while at the university. Mr. Bruce makes much of the fact that Woodrow Wilson was at the university for a time—graduated there in law or medicine or something. But Woodrow Wilson was really quite insignificant as a student: as a student he does not rank with such engaging personalities as "Sinner" White or Paul B. Barringer, that true descendant of the splendid planters who lost his academic degree by riding his horse up the steps of the Rotunda and into the building. An absolutely complete history of a college would, too, include some account of the balls and festivities, and of the visiting girls and college widows who made life worth while for the students of the past.

But such a study would possibly be considered beneath the dignity of history, interesting as it would be, and within the realm of formal history Mr. Bruce's narrative is well-nigh perfect. Especially is this true in respect to the professors. It might seem worth while to be a college professor if one could be sure that a Bruce would go into the details of one's life and set them forth in such a work. No man of any consequence who was ever a teacher at Charlottesville has been overlooked. No course of study has been neglected, no incident of the slightest importance in administration, finance or progression. The narrative is complete with a completeness almost meticulous, though not quite so. It is the completeness of an artist in details.

The style of the book is altogether admirable. Probably no such readable college history has ever been written before. In spite of the great size of the work, the pages slip by so easily and pleasantly that one finds a volume read before one realizes it. In literary workmanship, as in research, the history is all that could be desired.

The fourth volume is devoted to the later activities of the University. This is the only volume really open to criticism. Mr. Bruce has included an account of the rise and development of athletics at the university. He has done so with a most obvious ignorance of such matters as baseball and football. The assistance of some one conversant with college sports would have been beneficial, for in the modern college athletics rank ahead of everything else. In fact, the experience and reputation that a student gains as a football player are more important than any mere course of study. Boys recognize this fact, and are blamed for doing so, as if academic theories are more vital than realities. The truth is that a student can capitalize an athletic reputation so as to get a vast start in the race of life. Since athletics are thus in no sense inferior in importance to studies, they are worthy of a more detailed and technical treatment than Mr. Bruce has given them.

But in a work so vast such a deficiency can not be considered a great blemish. The fact remains that Mr. Bruce has written the best college history ever written in this country. Indeed, he has devoted to telling the story of a small college riches of learning and literary skill that would have adorned the relation of the fall of an empire.

One feature that must be emphasized is the excellence of the characterizations. Jefferson and his compeers; Long; Sylvester; Gessner (the Great) Harrison; the absurd Bledsoe; the very singular Schele de Vere; the majestic John B. Minor; Gildersleeve, world figure in scholarship; Noah K. Davis, that mind of Descartes and soul of child; "Daddy" Holmes; illustrious Mallet; Paul B. Barringer, fat scientist loved by so many generations of school-boys for his Lincolnian stories; Alderman, first king; Milton Humphreys, greatest of them all—these figures and many more pass through the delightful pages of Mr. Bruce's charming book. Everybody who ever succeeded in attending the university—if only for a brief season—should read it.

H. J. ECKENRODE.

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ABSTRACT OF LOWER NORFOLK COUNTY WILLS. Compiled by Charles F. McIntosh, Norfolk, Va. Published by the Colonial Dames of America in the State of Virginia. A Complete Series of Abstracts of all the Wills of Lower Norfolk and Norfolk Counties, now on Record in the Clerk's Office at Portsmouth, Va., from 1637 to 1710. Lower Norfolk County included the Present Princess Anne and Norfolk Counties. Price \$3.00. For sale by the Bell Book and Stationery Co., Richmond, Va.

As a second volume of Abstracts of Norfolk Wills by Mr. McIntosh is nearly ready for publication we are glad again to call attention to the first one, published a few years ago. It is a book indispensable to all persons interested in the people and families of that section. *The Abstract of Norfolk Wills* is exactly one of those books which soon get out of print and which later bring a price provokingly high to people who need them. Mr. McIntosh and the Virginia Society of Colonial